

THE INDYPENDENT

#229: NOVEMBER 2017 • INDYPENDENT.ORG

ARTS FUNDING FOR
THE REST OF US, P4

AMAZON STALKS THE
BIG APPLE, P6

FALL MUSIC, P20

RESISTANCE & RESILIENCE IN
PUERTO RICO
COVERAGE STARTS ON PAGE 10

Hurricane Maria
survivors inside their
home.

CAROLYN COLE/GETTY IMAGES

SANDY
5TH ANNIVERSARY

WE REMEMBER.
WE RESIST.
WE RISE.

Demand our
elected officials
urgently take
bold steps to fight
the climate crisis.
SANDY5.ORG
For more, see Page 15

MARCH
ACROSS THE
BROOKLYN
BRIDGE

SATURDAY OCTOBER 28TH

11AM

CADMAN PLAZA, BROOKLYN



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COMMUNITY CALENDAR



FRI OCT 20
6:30PM • FREE
SCREENING: BLACK PANTHERS: VANGUARD OF THE REVOLUTION
A film screening and discussion on the riveting documentary exploring the Black Panther Party, its significance for black people and to the broader American culture and the painful lessons wrought when the movement derailed.
MAYDAY SPACE
176 St. Nicholas Ave., Brooklyn

MON OCT 23
7PM–9PM • \$5–\$10
DEBATE: DOES NEW YORK STATE NEED A CON-CON?
Once every 20 years NY voters have the chance to convene a state constitutional convention. This Nov. 7 will be that chance. But is it a good idea? *The Indy* hosts a debate featuring Danielle DeMatteo, founder of SheNYCArts, and digital strategist Minista Jazz for the Yes side and Mike Fabricant, 1st Vice President of Professional Staff Congress-CUNY, and Dahlia McManus, deputy director of the Working Families Party, for the No side.
BROOKLYN COMMONS
388 Atlantic Ave.

MON OCT 23
6PM–9PM • FREE
LECTURE: NKNOME: REMEMBERING THE CUBAN PRINT-MAKER BELKIS AYON
A panel conversation on the life and work of the late Afro-Cuban artist Belkis Ayón. This event coincides with a

retrospective of Ayón’s work on view at El Museo del Barrio (1230 5th Ave.) until Nov. 5.
KING JUAN CARLOS I OF SPAIN CENTER, AUDITORIUM
53 Washington Square South

TUE OCT 24
7PM–10 PM • FREE
FORUM: CLIMATE SOLUTIONS TOWN HALL
As part of a week of action marking five years since Superstorm Sandy, 350Brooklyn and the Brooklyn College Urban Sustainability Program are host a climate town hall. The panel includes Priya Mulgaonkar from the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance and Sean Sweeney, Director of the CUNY International Program for Labor, Climate and Environment. Register in advance via eventbrite.com.
BROOKLYN COLLEGE
2900 Bedford Ave.

THU OCT 26
6:30PM–8PM • FREE
DISCUSSION: IMPERIALISM & LATIN AMERICA: LAND GRABBING OF GARÍFUNA PEOPLES:
Leaders from the black-indigenous Garifuna people speak about the threats posed to their communities by multinational corporations and their own Honduran government
CUNY GRADUATE CENTER
365 Fifth Avenue, Room C198

FRI OCT 27
7PM–9:30PM • FREE
BOOK LAUNCH: WE CROSSED A BRIDGE AND IT TREMBLED: VOICES

FROM SYRIA
Appearing with journalist and illustrator Molly Crabapple, Wendy Pearlman will discuss her new book, which chronicles the war in Syria from its origins to its present horror through the words of ordinary people.
BLUESTOCKINGS BOOKSTORE
172 Allen St.

SAT OCT 28
11AM–2PM • FREE
MARCH: #SANDY5
On the 5th anniversary of Superstorm Sandy, New Yorkers will march together to remember the lives lost, the damage incurred and to demand bold climate action from elected leaders.
1 Cadman Plaza East, Brooklyn

TUE OCT 31 THRU NOV 5
7:30PM TUE–FRI, 2PM & 7PM SAT–SUN • \$30
PERFORMANCE: MACBETH
No Name Collective presents a novel interpretation of William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Lady Macbeth morphs into her husband when she invokes the spirits to “unsex me here.”
THE YARD
16 Waverly Ave., Brooklyn Navy Yard

TUE OCT 31
8PM–2AM • \$10
PARTY: SOVIET 80’S HALLOWEEN PARTY
Dance to the tunes of the 1980’s Soviet Union, especially those produced by the old state-run Melodiya records.

Costumes are strongly encouraged.
DROM
85 Avenue A

WED NOV 1
7:30PM • \$30
BOOK LAUNCH: MATT TAIBBI PRESENTS I CAN’T BREATHE: A KILLING ON BAY STREET
Rolling Stone journalist Matt Taibbi presents his newest book, an immersive account of the infamous killing of Eric Garner on Staten Island by New York City police. Tickets available at eventbrite.com. Book included with admission.
ST. JOSEPH’S COLLEGE
245 Clinton Ave., Brooklyn

SAT NOV 4
8PM–11PM • \$10
PARTY: LATIN LEATHER DANCE PARTY
Gogo men, raffle prizes, DJ Chiki, salsa, merengue, bachata and more. All proceeds go to the Hispanic Federation for Hurricane Maria relief efforts.
THE EAGLE NYC
554 W 28th St.

SUN NOV 5
2PM–5PM • Sliding scale, \$6–\$15
TALK: KENT STATE: DEATH & DISSENT
Thomas Grace will discuss his book *Kent State: Death and Dissent in the Long Sixties*. Grace, a Kent State alum, explores the historical tragedy that occurred when members of the National Guard opened fire on students on May 4, 1970. The battle over

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THE INDYPENDENT

OCT/NOV

SANDRO KOPP/SONY PICTURES CLASSIC

the memory and meaning of shooting continues to this day. Hosted by the Marxist Education Project.
NEW PERSPECTIVES THEATRE COMPANY
458 W. 37th St.

TUE NOV 7

6PM–9PM • FREE

CELEBRATION: THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA

Join the *Journal of Labor and Society* in commemorating this world altering event. Learn about how socialism wiped out illiteracy, ended women's bondage, unemployment and Russia's participation in war and empire.
CENTER FOR WORKER EDUCATION, 7TH FL. AUDITORIUM
25 Broadway

THU NOV 9

7PM–9PM • \$16

SCREENING: "195 LEWIS"

Enjoy two new releases highlighting the experiences of queer and trans people of color. First, catch the short *Walk for Me*, a contemporary coming-out story; next, an episode of the web series "195 Lewis," a boundary-pushing dramedy that follows a group of women navigating black and queer life in Bed-Stuy. This screening will be followed by a Q&A with series-creator Chanelle Aponte Pearson and cast members. Brooklyn rapper Nappy Nina will perform.
BROOKLYN MUSEUM
200 Eastern Pkwy

SUN NOV 12

1:30PM–10:30PM • \$20

SCREENING: NYC CANNABIS FILM FESTIVAL

The third annual New York City Cannabis Film Festival brings you the best of cannabis cinema. This year's selections include nine short and two feature films from seven countries.
WYTHE HOTEL
80 Wythe Ave., Brooklyn

SUN NOV 12

2PM–7PM • \$15

FUNDRAISER: PARTY LIKE IT'S 1917: PAGEANTRY, POETRY & PARAPHERNALIA

Join this unique commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution hosted by *The Independent* and the Marxist Education Project. Indulge your imagination. Dance, eat, recite

heart-pounding historical texts and take part in an auction of revolutionary paraphernalia. Play your favorite character from Lenin to Rasputin to the Romanovs, from Trotsky to Alexandra Kollantai. Costumes optional.

THE BROOKLYN COMMONS
388 Atlantic Ave.

MON NOV 13

7:30PM–10PM • \$10

READING: A CELEBRATION OF GWENDOLYN BROOKS

A celebration of the late great poet and author, featuring readings by Elizabeth Alexander, Tyehimba Jess, Yusef Komunyakaa, Quraysh Ali Lansana, Marilyn Nelson, Atsuro Riley, Sapphire, Solmaz Sharif and Patricia Smith.

UNTERBERG POETRY CENTER OF THE 92ND STREET Y
1395 Lexington Ave.

WED NOV 15

7:30PM–10PM • \$20

CLASS: WITCHCRAFT 101: PLANT MAGIK

Take part in a hands-on, in-depth exploration of herbs, roots, minerals and curios, their attributes, uses and interactions. Learn how to access the medicine and magic plants have to offer. Find out what makes certain herbs "sacred."
CATLAND
987 Flushing Ave., Brooklyn

THU NOV 16

6PM–8PM • FREE

SHOWCASE: WOMEN PHOTOGRAPHERS OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

A celebration of the highly-anticipated inaugural issue of *MFON*, a bi-annual journal committed to establishing and representing the voices of women photographers of African descent. This issue features 100 women photographers from across the African diaspora.
MAGNUM FOUNDATION
59 East 4th St.

THU NOV 16

7PM • \$25

MUSIC: YASMINE HAMDAN

The Lebanese singer brings her modern take on Arabic pop music to Le Poisson Rouge.
158 Bleecker St.



RUSSIAN SCHOOL/TATE MUSEUM



195 LEWIS LLC

FROM BEIRUT TO BLEEKER STREET:

Yasmine Hamdan, shown here in Jim Jarmusch's *Only Lovers Left Alive*, takes her soulful Arab pop sound to Le Poisson Rouge on Nov. 16.

JOANNA GET YOUR GUN:

A Soviet agitprop poster circa 1919. Get your Bolshevik on with a Nov. 7 celebration of the Russian Revolution at the Center for Worker Education and a costume party fundraiser hosted by *The Indy* on Nov. 12.

QUEER LOVE: Rae Leone Allen and Sirita Wright in the Brooklyn-set web series "195 Lewis," showing at the Brooklyn Museum on Nov. 9.

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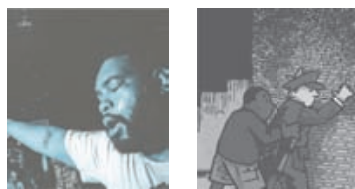
Author Alex Vitale doesn't have much use for the police.

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Two new titles explore the nature of the far right.

ALL TOO REAL, P23

The dystopian world of *Blade Runner* is nearly upon us.



A BROADER CANVAS

PEOPLE OF COLOR FIGHT FOR A PLACE IN MONEYED ARTS ECOSYSTEM

BY MAYA CHUNG

A small number of legacy arts institutions are sweeping up vast shares of public art funding, while newer immigrant and ethnic arts groups in New York City are clamoring for the remaining resources.

A new coalition of artists and advocates is pushing the city to increase access to arts dollars for those who have been left out. The group has put together a 17-page document called the People's Cultural Plan to serve as a set of policy recommendations for the city government which, if implemented, would more definitively benefit smaller arts groups — often grassroots organizations run by immigrant or minority artists.

The document comes in response to a cultural plan unveiled by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in July 2017. Called CreateNYC, the plan aims to “serve as a roadmap to a more inclusive, equitable, and resilient cultural ecosystem, in which all residents have a stake.”

Those behind the People's Cultural Plan argue that CreateNYC isn't doing enough. And access to funding is where smaller groups suffer. In fiscal year 2017, \$111 million of the \$177 million Department of Cultural Affairs budget was granted to just 33 large institutions, according to CreateNYC. These organizations are members of the Cultural Institutions Group, made up of culturally significant, generally well-established public institutions. This imbalance of funding comes at the expense of smaller, often immigrant or minority-run arts groups, which then face stiff competition for the remaining resources.

Nicole Reiner, an organizer of the People's Cultural Plan, noted that there are about 1,000 smaller and often less established organizations that then must compete for what is left of the budget. Manhattan receives “ten times the funding per capita compared to Queens,” she said.

Reiner believes the problem persists because people are “stuck to a definition of artistic quality that's grounded in elite Eurocentric norms” that advantage already privileged organizations.

Northwestern University's Jennifer Novak, author of a 2016 paper entitled “Considering Cultural Integration in the United States,” agreed. “Broadening the aperture we use to understand arts and cultural participation” is crucial in an increasingly diverse country, she said.

The People's Cultural Plan recommends the city increase the Department of Cultural Affairs' budget to \$840 million — nearly five times fiscal year 2017's budget of \$177 million, though still just 1 percent of New York City's total budget. Under its plan, \$140 million would be allocated to “initiatives in support of POC [persons-of-color] artists and cultural workers.”

An imbalanced allocation of funds is not the only issue the People's Cultural Plan takes up. Smaller and mid-sized organizations also “need to compete every

year for funding” through complicated grants systems, Reiner said. This is “incredibly burdensome, especially for immigrant communities for whom English is not their first language.”

Further, the city's cultural plan introduces a range of new mandates, including diversity quotas for staff and boards. For smaller organizations, this may mean greater investment in administrative costs. CreateNYC is creating “more hurdles” for these groups, says Reiner. CreateNYC mandates organizations develop diversity plans, but it doesn't “allocate funding for the creation of the plans.”

Larger institutions are better positioned to meet the new requirements because of their disposable income, Reiner said. They also benefit from designated development staffers who can focus on fundraising, while smaller grassroots organizations don't have this kind of support. “You've got a system that's really piling up advantage on a select few institutions which tend to represent a very narrow view of what culture is worth funding,” she said.

From her office on West 89th Street, Ballet Hispanico's Chief Development Officer Lorraine LaHuta paints a different picture. Ballet Hispanico is a success story, said LaHuta, explaining the company was founded in 1970 as a Latino-focused “grassroots or-

In Queens, artist Guido Garaycochea confirmed this challenge. “People don't want to give money,” he said. Garaycochea, who immigrated to the United States from Peru, said that for immigrants, trust is a factor. “What are you going to do with the money?” would-be patrons ask.

Smaller organizations are “at a disadvantage compared to other organizations that have longevity,” Garaycochea said. “They have the reputation and the names. They're going to get the money.”

Carlos Martinez, an immigrant artist from Colombia, now works as a mentor with the New York Foundation for the Arts' Immigrant Artist Mentoring Program to help immigrant artists navigate the difficult process of connecting with funding and other resources.

“Resources are the most critical part,” Martinez said. Beyond that, “understanding the language barrier, the change of culture, different dynamics” is often challenging for newly arrived immigrant artists, especially when it comes to the grant application process.

Applying for grants is a huge hurdle, confirmed Ayoka Wiles-Abel, grants manager at the Brooklyn Arts Council. She said there is a “learning curve” in-

CREATING OPPORTUNITY:

Carlos Martinez, an immigrant from Colombia, helps other immigrant artists navigate the difficult process of connecting with funding.

THE PROBLEM PERSISTS BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE 'STUCK TO A DEFINITION OF ARTISTIC QUALITY THAT'S GROUNDED IN ELITE EUROCENTRIC NORMS.'

ganization” — similar to ones Reiner and the People's Cultural Plan are fighting for — when the founder, Tina Ramirez, “saw Latino children with nothing to do” in the neighborhood.

But if Ballet Hispanico struggled to acquire funding in its early stages, it seems to be a distant memory at this point.

LaHuta said she has been “overwhelmingly touched by the generosity and interest” of city government. Pointing out that the organization is not eligible for certain funding because it's “too big,” LaHuta insists that all organizations can “find the opportunity [for funding] if you're really looking for it.”

City Council members have been “amazingly open to hearing from arts organizations,” she said. “It's really impressive how much they care about what's going on in their districts.”

But looking beyond city funding, Peter Kostmayer, CEO of Citizens Committee for New York City, an organization that funds neighborhood development projects, identified another hurdle that smaller arts groups face: big donors like to give big grants. And as a result, smaller groups asking for less money fall through the cracks.

involved, and the application process may be particularly difficult if there is a language barrier or questions of documentation.

Now familiar with the complicated and competitive process, Martinez works to help immigrants navigate it and connect them with spaces to exhibit their work and to network.

A final barrier to obtaining sufficient funding may be that people just aren't that interested in financing the arts, Kostmayer said. The Citizens Committee for New York City has “very few funders who are interested in the arts.” Only 74 of the 292 grants the organization awarded in 2017 were for arts and culture-related projects, said Director of Programs Arif Ullah.

And unfortunately, many of the donors who do want to provide funding for the arts “want to give to the Met and give to the Whitney,” Kostmayer said. “They're not focused on kids of color in Bushwick creating a new dance.”



ELIA GRAN

WHO PAYS THE PRICE FOR CUOMO'S "FREE" TUITION PLAN? WORKING-CLASS STUDENTS LIKE ME

BY AMIR KHAFAGY

It's the start of the school year and like many of my fellow students, I am holding high aspirations for the upcoming semester. Yet, at the same time, I have an aching feeling of dread deep in the pit of my stomach.

Normally, at the beginning of a semester, an overwhelming feeling of anxiety about how I am going to pay for my classes at Queens College overcomes me. I wonder if I will qualify for financial aid and debate if I can even afford to take time off from work. I spend more time stressing over the money I need to afford school than I do over my grades. I stress about another semester skipping meals, missing rent and losing sleep. Luckily our most honorable and gracious governor, Andrew Cuomo, has come to my rescue!

When I heard Cuomo announce his Excelsior Scholarship program for free college tuition at a press conference with Bernie Sanders, I was excited. Finally, some financial relief. But a part of me was suspicious. We native New Yorkers can smell bullshit a mile away. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. The devil is in the details.

In the days after the governor made his announcement, the grimy specifics of the plan began to slowly come out. Each drop began to look much worse than the last and my optimism slowly died. What looked at first to be a revolutionary plan to change the lives of millions of New Yorkers, ended up becoming a plan to further marginalize millions of our state's poorest and most vulnerable residents. What was supposed to be a plan to bridge racial and economic divides and spread equality will widen those divides.

Approximately 60 percent of CUNY students go to college for free already. Most members of CUNY's student population are poor or working class, rendering them eligible for New York's tuition assistance program (TAP) and for federal Pell grants. More than half of CUNY students dangle dangerously close to the poverty line, earning less than \$30,000 a year. That population is also overwhelmingly composed of people of color.

In 2015, a CUNY demographic study found that white students make up just 26.2 percent of the senior college population and 15.3 percent of the community college population. Almost a third of students in both the CUNY and SUNY systems go to school part time. Cuomo's plan demands students take 30 credits a year and graduate on time in order to go to school for "free." Part-time students, including the 80,000 students in the CUNY system like me, are being overtly ignored by the plan. It punishes students who must work while attending school in order to survive.

The governor claims that his plan incentives part-time students to become full-time students. He obviously does not have a clue what it's like growing up poor and of color in one of the most unaffordable and economically unequal cities in the world. The state has not offered working-class students of color relief from the burdens preventing them from pursuing a full-time course load. We're not considered the "deserving poor."

Cuomo's Excelsior Scholarship program is effectively affirmative action for middle-class whites at the expense of working-class people of color, and that expense has just got substantially more expensive. For the 80,000 part-time students at CUNY, including undocumented students who are not eligible for the Excelsior Scholarship, the governor's program has ended up being a Trojan horse for tuition hikes.

On July 21, the Executive Board of CUNY's Board of Trustees voted

HIGHER (PRICED) LEARNING: Instruction at CUNY's Bronx Community College.

PAT ARNOW

Continued on page 8

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5

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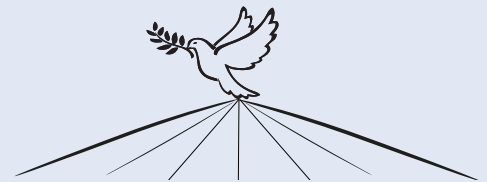
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November 2017 THE INDEPENDENT

GENTRIFICATION PRIME

POLITICIANS ARE FALLING ALL OVER THEMSELVES TO ATTRACT AMAZON, BUT BIG TECH IS ALREADY SPARKING FEARS OF MASS DISPLACEMENT IN THE CITY

BY PETER RUGH

When Amazon, the company that has expanded from dominating online book sales to chasing near-monopoly status in Internet retailing, announced in September that it was looking for a city to plop its second North American headquarters into, Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams saw an opportunity. He teamed up with Andrew Hoan, president of the borough's Chamber of Commerce, to pen a letter to the fat cats in Seattle.

"Dear Amazon: Ready, set, grow!" it begins. "Since Robert Fulton steamed and Emily Roebling bridged, Brooklyn has been getting ready for you."

The pining Tinder screed went on to praise Brooklyn's "world-class arts and culture, five-star foodie experiences, healthy workplace initiatives" and its "incredible transit access." Yes, they were talking about the same transit system that Adams called for investigating four months earlier, in order to calculate how much its endemic delays cost in "lost economic productivity" and the "resulting impact to business in our city and state."

"With several prime options along Brooklyn's Innovation Coast already in construction, stretching from Sunset Park to Williamsburg, we can accommodate your immediate and long-term needs," Adams and Hoan continued.

New York has joined a host of other cities across North America in submitting bids for Amazon's \$5 billion "HQ2" in advance of an Oct. 19 proposal submission deadline. The company has not, as of yet, stated when it expects to make its final decision.

Even if New York beats out contenders like Atlanta, Boston and Toronto, whether the company will establish a base in Brooklyn is anybody's guess — although the borough's spacious, increasingly deindustrialized waterfront gives it a decent chance. But Adams' inability to keep his pants on at the prospect of the company's arrival is indicative of our political class's suck-up approach to all things silicon.

Adams spokesperson Stefan Ringel told *The Independent* it would be between Mayor Bill de Blasio and the New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC) to decide what taxpayer subsidies and other incentives to use as bait, while *City and State* quotes an Adams spokesperson saying that "all ideas will be on the discussion table for a unique opportunity like this."

UNION SQUARE

Earlier this year, de Blasio announced plans to expand Silicon Alley from the Flatiron District south to Union Square. The name "Silicon Alley" is more of a metonym these days, since the arrival of Google in the Meatpacking District in 2013 and Facebook in the East Village the following year, but the mayor's proposal to turn the site of the P.C. Richard electronic-appliance store on East 14th Street into a tech hub set off alarm bells among neighborhood residents, who have been clamoring for more affordable housing.

Dubbed Civic Hall, the 258,000-square-foot development "will generate 600 good-paying jobs" on the city-owned property, the mayor's office claimed in a February press release. It will "include a digital job training facility for all New Yorkers, and modern, flexible workspaces designed to meet the unique needs of early-stage startups in New York's vibrant innovation economy."

That announcement seemed to presage the Democratic Party's new platform, unveiled this spring, which called

for "better skills." Critics of the push for new coders see it as a way of driving down wages in the tech industry, by flooding its labor pool. There's also the issue of the widespread displacement the industry's expansion brings.

Andrew Berman, director of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, considers the proposed tech hub part of a "development virus."

"What we're seeing in the blocks directly adjacent to the site is a stunning and overwhelming wave of development, some of it fueled by the expansion of the tech industry," says Berman, whose organization seeks to protect the neighborhoods between 14th and Houston streets.

Numerous condo and office towers are in the works along Broadway, as well as a luxury hotel on East 12th Street and the recently completed "Death Star" at Astor Place — nicknamed for its imposing bulk and dark tinted windows. Whatever the merits of Civic Hall may be, the GVSHSP wants the neighborhood's current zoning laws, which date back to 1961, amended to tie new developments between University Place and Broadway to the preservation and creation of affordable housing. City Councilmember Rosie Mendez, who represents the East Village, has said she won't sign off on the tech hub unless it is accompanied by such a rezoning, as has her near-certain successor, Democratic candidate Carlina Rivera.

"It is disappointing certain groups would use that project as a pawn to change unrelated zoning blocks away," a spokesperson for the mayor told *DNAInfo*.

Affordable housing is the "kind of thing the Mayor says he wants," notes Berman, "but here he is, standing in the way, saying 'no' to anything other than luxury high-rise development in the area.... If you look at places like Cambridge and San Francisco, the unchained expansion of the tech industry can fuel the fires of gentrification to an astounding degree. What we're saying is, 'Do it the smart way. If you've identified a spot for the tech industry to go, just make sure you are protecting the surrounding area.'"

Andrew Rasiej, the entrepreneur behind Civic Hall, has donated \$4,950 to the mayor's re-election campaign and \$1,000 to Rivera. RAL Development Group, which is slated to build the tech hub, and its lobbyist, James Capalino, each made separate \$10,000 donations to de Blasio's Campaign for One New York charity, which disbanded last year after coming under investigation for its fundraising practices. David Lichtenstein, CEO of Lightstone Group, which is behind the luxury hotel slated for 12th Street, is another major de Blasio campaign donor. Lichtenstein is also on the board of directors for the EDC — which is overseeing the development on the P.C. Richard site.

Neither Rivera nor the mayor's office responded to requests for comment.

INNOVATION COAST?

Regardless of whether it locates its HQ2 in New York, Amazon is already expanding here. It announced on Sept. 21 that its advertising, fashion and Web-services divisions will be setting up offices near Wall Street, at 5 Manhattan West, after securing \$20 million in tax credits from the Empire State Development Corporation's (ESDC's) Excelsior Jobs Program. Amazon is also opening a warehouse — or in the digital age's Orwellian market-speak, a "fulfillment center" — on Staten Island, for which it will receive \$18 million in tax relief from ESDC.

Amazon has long been dogged by accusations of mistreating its workforce. It has sabotaged unionization drives and subjected workers to security screenings that have added as much as an hour of unpaid time to each

workday. Amazon kept an ambulance on call at a Pennsylvania fulfillment center because that was cheaper than preventing heatstroke by putting in air-conditioning. The company's cruelty has not been limited to its blue-collar employees, either. "Nearly every person I worked with, I saw cry at their desk," a former employee at its Seattle headquarters told the *New York Times* in 2015.

Public officials from Adams to de Blasio and Gov. Andrew Cuomo argue that the tech industry brings economic growth and jobs. But what kind of growth and what kind of jobs?

"I think every city should take a pass on HQ2," says Jeff Reifman, a Seattle tech blogger and former Microsoft employee. "But I hope one of them does choose Amazon, because I don't want them to double their size here in Seattle."

Amazon's Seattle-based workforce has grown from 5,200 employees in 2010 to more than 40,000 today. It has pursued a classic monopoly strategy, undercutting competitors' prices in order to gain market share. The company isn't so much concerned with making money as it is with making sure other retailers don't. Despite being the world's third-largest retailer after Walmart and CVS and having \$482 billion in market capitalization, it made just \$252 million in profits in the third quarter of this year. Some years it hasn't made a profit at all.

Amazon's rise in Seattle, cautions Reifman, has been accompanied by increased overcrowding, the widespread displacement of longtime residents and a general "erosion of the quality of life." Average rents and the number of people sleeping on the city's streets have both more than doubled. The company's massive investments in growth have not substantially improved Seattleites' incomes. More than half of city residents earn less than \$50,000 a year and a quarter make less than \$25,000. Unlike Seattle, New York has rent-stabilization laws and policies that require some new buildings to meet an affordable-housing quota, but those haven't been enough to stem the tide of hypergentrification already under way here in Empire City.

Who stands to gain from the arrival of a second Amazon headquarters?

The biggest beneficiaries, as with the tech hub near Union Square, would be developers. Rudin Management, Forest City Ratner, Rubenstein Partners and Jamestown Properties have formed an alliance, joining with Borough President Adams to lobby Amazon. Rubenstein Partners' 500,000-square-foot property under construction at 25 Kent Avenue in Williamsburg is one option. Another is Jamestown's Industry City, a 6-million-square-foot former industrial port on the waterfront in Sunset Park that has been converted to a campus for offices, artisanal-tchotchke makers and an avocado bar. It has drawn ire from the surrounding community over gentrification concerns.

Industry City CEO Andrew Kimball told the *Village Voice* in September that 6,000 people are currently employed on the campus, about half from Sunset Park and the neighboring communities.

"None of our documentation shows whether significant job growth took place as a result of Industry City," responded Doug Turetsky of the city's Independent Budget Office. "It's hard to tell if the company brought anything to the neighborhood — besides \$25 coffee."

Ryan Chavez of UPROSE, a Sunset Park-based environmental-justice group, says his organization would like to see development in the neighborhood, but Industry City is precisely the opposite of what the historically immigrant community needs. Jamestown is "looking to turn an industrial hub that has for decades served the





GINO BARZIZZA

working class into a playground for the privileged,” he told *The Indy*. “They’ve opened the floodgates to the commercialization of our entire waterfront.”

Chavez must have missed the memo: It’s called “Innovation Coast” now, according to Adams and his developer allies.

Jamestown is applying to rezone Industry City — currently the largest privately owned industrial site in the New York area — in order to accommodate a luxury hotel. UPROSE has a different kind of innovation in mind. It wants the city to do more to ensure that Brooklyn’s waterfront preserves its manufacturing jobs by encouraging the development of new, green industries, such as producing solar panels, that will help address climate change.

“The city should draw a red line around our industrial zones and not sign off on projects that directly undermine them,” says Chavez. “There should be a coordinated, interagency effort to identify and attract green business and foster their local development. These are blue-collar jobs that are going to be created somewhere. Why not put a community that itself is vulnerable to climate change to work?”



CALL TO ARTISTS

New York City's beloved progressive voice, WBAI Radio, is conducting its second annual fundraising art exhibit and auction. The event will take place on Thursday, Nov. 16, at the Chesterfield Gallery on Norfolk Street, NYC.

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MEMOIR: Jonathan Lerner, a member of the 60’s Weather Underground who later reinvented himself as high-rolling gay hustler, shares his poignant and quintessentially American story, *Swords in the Hands of Children*.

NOV 8 • 7–9:30PM

HISTORY: Marcus Rediker shares The Fearless Benjamin Lay, his chronicle of a Quaker dwarf who demanded the total, unconditional emancipation of all enslaved Africans around the world and drew on his ideals to create a revolutionary way of life.

TUITION PLAN

Continued from page 5

to enact a \$150-per-semester tuition hike, part of a plan to raise tuition by \$300 a year over the next five years. Who knew something free could be so expensive? Students attending CUNY’s senior colleges are currently up against a \$6,530 yearly bill. As Cuomo congratulates himself for his progressive chops, the most socially and economically oppressed groups of students are paying the price. CUNY’s legacy has always been steeped in class and racial conflict. Working-class black and Latino students fought for and won the desegregation of CUNY in 1969. The demographic makeup of our university today is a direct result of that struggle. It is up to us to live up to that legacy. We owe it to those who came before us. We owe it to ourselves. And most of all, we owe it to future students. Without a student movement demanding an end to CUNY’s racist and class-prejudicial policies, we will continue to be at the mercy of those who care little

about us. Our continued exclusion within CUNY should be an eye-opening caveat to the struggle that lies ahead.

Amir Khafagy is a self-described “Arab-Rican” *New Yorker*, born and raised. A political activist, organizer, writer, performer and spoken word artist, Amir is currently pursuing a master’s degree in Urban Affairs at Queens College.

SOME PLACES YOU CAN FIND

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- Bronx native
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- Establishing community control over policing

As public advocate, I will provide the tools for organizing and empowering communities to stand up to city government and its agencies when they fail us and build a New York City that honors and respects all people and not just the wealthy few.

Paid for by the James Lane for Public Advocate campaign.

SUPPORTING PUERTO RICO FROM NEW YORK

BY LENINA NADAL

They called her “Screaming” Hurricane Maria on the island. Here, in New York and beyond, Diasporicans roar back with large and small acts of love, light and a reclamation of our madre tierra (Mother Earth).

They are also speaking their truths. The stories below are drawn from interviews with longtime Puerto Rican activists and organizers in the diaspora who have been active in various ways in the relief efforts — gathering and loading supplies, identifying organizations to send shipments to, coordinating actions, and creating manifestos on facebook to enliven the base. This is small sample of stories, but they suggest there are ways to engage, participate and increase the outrage.

SOLIDARITY IN ACTION

UPROSE

uprose.org

The oldest Puerto Rican organization in Brooklyn, UPROSE is working with local businesses in Sunset Park to bring sustainable supplies and resources to Puerto Rico. They are also working with national environmental groups like Greenpeace in order to send massive amounts of rebuilding supplies to the Island.

#PR ON THE MAP

rosaclemente.net

#PRontheMap

<https://www.facebook.com/ReportReimagineRevive/>

Activist/journalist Rosa Clemente is collecting funds for a P.R./Latinx reporting team to do on-the-ground reporting that draws on strong familial and organizational relationships on the island. It is the only such effort of its kind from the diaspora.

LOISAIDA INC

loisaida.org

This Lower East Side cultural center is gathering eco-friendly survival necessities at its home at 710 E. 9th St. The donations are assembled into eco-kits that are carried to the island by volunteer travelers and grassroots groups on the island.

APREE (ASSOCIATION OF PUERTO RICANS FOR EDUCATION & EMPOWERMENT)

apree.org

A grassroots organization based in Brooklyn made up of former members of Puerto Rican student and socialist organizations in the 1960s. They

hold mentorship workshops for Latinx and Puerto Rican youth in NYC. They are fundraising for schools in Puerto Rico through providing classroom materials and educational materials to la Nueva Escuela, based in Puerto Rico.

EL MAESTRO CULTURAL CENTER

facebook.com/elmaestrobx

Named in honor of Puerto Rican independence leader Pedro Albizu Campos (“El Maestro”), this East Bronx community center is collecting necessities to send to Ponce, Puerto Rico’s second largest city, which has experienced extreme neglect since Hurricane Maria struck the island.

CENTER FOR POPULAR DEMOCRACY

mariafund.org

The CPD has created a Hurricane Maria Community Relief & Recovery Fund. Grants will be awarded by a committee of Puerto Ricans, 50 percent from the island and 50 percent in the diaspora. Groups that have already receive help include the Taller Salud in Loíza, the G8 of Caño Martín Peña in San Juan and Centro para Desarrollo Político, Educativo y Cultural in Caguas.

MUTUAL AID NETWORK FOR PUERTO RICO

redapoyomutuopr.com

This volunteer-run decentralized network of more than 100 groups is coordinating rapid response and long-term mutual aid with Puerto Rico. It hosts daily 5 pm phone calls with Spanish and English translation provided to maximize inclusivity.

KIYA VEGA-HUTCHENS

Climate Justice Policy Organizer, UPROSE

I grew up in the Lower East Side as a Nuyorican, and this has been a really emotional experience. My extended family lives in the municipalities of Loíza and Carolina in the northeast of Puerto Rico. They do not have power. We spent a lot of time trying to find them. It’s hard to know that my family is in this urgent, desperate situation, and at the same time I also feel disconnected. There is a lot of guilt and feeling like we can never really do enough.

The Trump administration’s mistreatment and lack of knowledge is infuriating. It is so callous. I’ve been really inspired by the Nuyorican and Puerto Rican diaspora coming together. It makes me hopeful that we have a strong resilient foundation. We had a healing space at UPROSE where a lot of people came and were able to grieve and also plan our next steps together. We communicate regularly with folks on the island and are organizing to send sustainable supplies. The groups we are working with are asking about bicycles, quality soil, non-GMO seeds, water supplies and solar panels so Puerto Rico can move toward economic sovereignty.

On Oct. 11 we held a rally at Union Square as a part of a national day of action for a just recovery. The following day we sent supplies down with bikes and generators.

What we really want is a just recovery for Puerto Rico. We don’t want investment capitalists to further a plan that prioritizes their corporate interests. We want the communities that have been directly affected to determine what needs to be done for Puerto Rico.

UPROSE is apart of the Climate Justice Alliance. We will be following the lead of grassroots groups that have been asking that we build their energy infrastructure in a way that doesn’t exploit the planet and in a way that is resilient and regenerative. We will be bringing more food to the island. We are going to be supporting them.





GISELY COLÓN LÓPEZ

Alliance for Puerto Rican Education & Empowerment (APREE)

My family is impacted directly by the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. The majority of my family lives in Camuy on Puerto Rico's northwestern plateau. We still don't know the extent of damage to property or their ability to endure more days or weeks with minimal to no electricity. But we at least know everyone has survived.

I've been most affected and empowered by the immense solidarity and national efforts made toward relief efforts for Puerto Rico. I have seen people collecting money on the street, bakeries selling goods in exchange for donations, and initiatives popping up in cities where the Puerto Rican population is less than 1 percent.

APREE has put together a Hurricane Relief Education Fund. We are accepting monetary donations and physical items that will enable children to return to school while also making efforts to support the ability of students to continue their education. We are making every effort to collaborate directly with community-led efforts so donors know who and where their donations are impacting directly. In addition to collecting money to rebuild schools and provide food and clean water for children, we are also looking into having generators donated so schools can reopen and keep electricity operational so students have access to fresh food and a safe school environment.

Puerto Ricans should invest time and effort into finding out exactly what the residents of Puerto Rico need now, and how to rebuild together. We should recognize that Puerto Rico was already enduring a humanitarian crisis. Everyone, not just Puerto Ricans, should be investing time into studying the history of Puerto Rico and the political reasons it was impossible to receive international aid after Hurricane Maria due to the Jones Act.



DAVID GALARZA SANTA

Board member of the Labor Council of Latin American Advancement, lead organizer of Emergency Action on Puerto Rico

My immediate family lives there. My dad and my sisters live in the small town of Florida which was not as hard hit, and I also have uncles and an aunt in Las Piedras in Humacao and I haven't heard from them.

I've been active since this crisis began. I work for a labor union and am involved in several organizations. I do the work of identifying groups that we know and trust, and am beginning to connect networks to donate money directly to them. I had a meeting with Giovanni Roberto who runs an organization called Comedores Sociales de Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico Social Kitchens). They run a food program and their inspiration comes from the Black Panther Party. They are feeding hundreds of people, but they also make sure to speak to folks about what is happening and what climate change is all about and how to make Puerto Rico more sustainable.

In the towns, everyone gathers and they fire up the generator and the people are sharing together, if people need water, you bring back for the whole block. There is the beautiful Puerto Rican spirit that outshines the negativity and makes us feel like we will be okay.

We need the support from our larger networks of progressive brothers and sisters to stop any and all efforts to privatize our paradise. It's great to see what is happening locally in New York. I visited a local restaurant in Harlem where they are just wrapping up efforts on behalf of islands struck by Hurricane Irma. The owner is African American and the wife is Chinese and they want to know how they can help those affected by Hurricane Maria. They don't have to do that. I think Puerto Ricans in the city are so much a part of the rhythm and soul in this city. You can't help but get involved.



HIRAM RIVERA

Former executive director of Philadelphia Student Union, organizer

I have one set of grandparents that are all in Isabella in the northwest and friends throughout the island. I also have friends as well in the Virgin Islands, which was also hard hit by the storm. I feel driven to do something and to act. I've heard from family from the west side. People are okay, but they are running out of water.

I used to run the Urban Youth Collaborative here in the city and have been involved with donation gathering and packaging in Brooklyn and in Philadelphia where I live now. Another thing I've been doing is sharing as much as I can through social media. I've been speaking to other organizers and Hurricane Katrina survivors and then trying to share those lessons with others.

We have had a tremendous positive response for the relief efforts. Now we need to shift to what will come after all this. The current push is to waive the Jones Act permanently and to cancel the Wall Street debt. In order to win that, organizers and activists need to start targeting the banks directly, the bondholders directly. We need to bring the storm home. They need to stop business as usual. That means targeted direct actions, rallies, workshops to build the skills of our people to carry out these campaigns.

People need to be organizing. Anyone and everyone who donates items, we need to get their contact information. We need to do popular education with our people. Our people are confused and scared and we need to help clarify this for them. They need to understand that this is a question of colonialism, and right now we have more Puerto Ricans questioning the colonial reality of Puerto Rico than we've had in decades.

We can learn the lessons of Hurricane Katrina. As soon as New Orleans was inundated by the storm, there were Republicans carving out a plan for they were going to do: Fire much of the public sector workforce, destroy the Board of Education and charterize the entire school district, tear down public housing. The plan came out of then-Congressman Mike Pence's office. They will offer people pennies to buy up their lands and take Puerto Rico away from the Puerto Ricans.

The last lesson is about what we can't buy at Home Depot, what soldiers and relief workers can't do. We cannot buy the emotional and psychological support our community needs. There is a collective trauma that will live in our brains and bodies in terms of generations to come. We will need to deal with this together in order to survive.

Right now we have to be building political organizations, not non-profits. We need to start building up the political education of our people, run workshops on how to do home repair, basic carpentry and plumbing. We need to convince the people in Puerto Rico to stay. Not to leave and abandon their homes. The only way you can convince them to stay is if we are willing to go there in droves to help them rebuild.

A STORM MORE SEVERE

DISASTER CAPITALISTS DESCEND ON DEBT-RAVAGED PUERTO RICO

By JOEL CINTRÓN ARBASSETTI

On Sept. 28, just over one week after Hurricane Maria swept through Puerto Rico, Gov. Ricardo Rosselló signed an executive order that exempted government agencies from obeying laws that regulate contracts with private companies until 90 days after the “emergency ends.” The suspension of the requirements and contract laws is justified in the order by the need for a rapid response in the face of the emergency.

But before Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico was in the middle of another storm — restructuring its \$74 billion debt load under Title III of the federal “Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act” (PROMESA). The law, signed by President Barack Obama in 2016, imposed a seven-member Fiscal Control Board upon the island, granting it domain over Puerto Rico’s finances. With the stated purpose of fixing the government’s deficit, the Control Board ordered cuts to services such as education and health, the privatization of public assets, increases in water prices and general austerity measures, without consulting the public or providing studies and economic projection models to justify the reasoning behind the austerity policies.

Now, in Maria’s wake, creditors and private contractors are eyeing Puerto Rico for ways to shake the desperate island down. Governor Rosselló has warned that the government could run out of money to pay public pensions as soon as the end of October, while the credit firm Moody’s estimates the cost of the damages caused by the hurricane will amount to between \$45 billion and \$95 billion. The latter figure exceeds the island’s current debt by \$21 billion.

The economist José Caraballo Cueto, a development specialist and adjunct professor of statistics and finances at the University of Puerto Rico in Cayey, thinks the suspension of contract laws could be beneficial to the emergency response, but only if there is a widely announced bidding process.

“If they take advantage of the circumstances to benefit X or Y company, it may not be so beneficial,” Cueto told *The Independent*. The construction industry will benefit most from Maria, according to the economist, due to an injection of funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Puerto Rico’s tourism and agriculture sectors will suffer.

FEEDING FRENZY

U.S. corporations have begun to arrive on the island, including energy and private security companies. According to Richard Ramos, executive director of the Electric Energy Authority of Puerto Rico (AEE), the hurricane destroyed 85 percent of the company’s transmission and energy distribution systems. Repairs could cost as much as \$5 billion. AEE, in consultation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, contracted Montana-based Whitefish Energy Holdings to repair transmission lines. They also awarded Weston Solutions from Philadelphia a \$35.1 million contract to provide energy to the damaged oil-fired Palo Seco plant, which powers San Juan. On Oct. 10, the Army Corps of Engineers announced that it will be granting an additional \$400 million in contracts to energy companies to repair AEE.

AEE was declared bankrupt under Title III of PROMESA in May due to its \$9 billion debt load, now in the hands of hedge funds. BlueMountain Capital, Angelo, Gordon & Co., Knighthead Capital, Marathon Asset Management, the mutual funds Oppenheimer Funds, Franklin Templeton and the insurance company Assured Guaranty, are among the firms holding AEE debt. After the storm, the creditors offered a new \$1 billion loan, which would have been given repayment priority under AEE’s bankruptcy process. The offer, however, was rejected by regulators with Puerto Rico’s Fiscal Agency and Financial Advisory Authority, a financial oversight body created in 2016, which saw the bondholder’s proposal as an effort to take advantage of the crisis and deepen the island’s debt.

Tesla, Inc. has also been in conversations with the government to reconstruct the electric system and the Federal Commission of Telecommunications (FCC) has granted an “experimental license” to Google so that it would provide cell phone services to islanders still grappling with Maria’s devastation. The private security company Academi, previously known as Blackwater, already has offers from the local and federal government and from the Red Cross to come to Puerto Rico. Meanwhile masked men, with large guns and without identification, watch over the Citadel building in Santurce, property of the multimillionaire Nicholas Prouty.

LOAN SHARKS CIRCLE

Numerous victims of the hurricane, especially those on the interior of the island and outside of metropolitan areas, find themselves without electrical power and suffering from a scarcity of water and food as *The Indy* goes to print. They are still awaiting assistance from local and federal agencies and the more than 8,000 soldiers who were deployed to deliver aid. Many public employees still have not been able to return to work, while private companies are announcing massive layoffs over the radio.

In remarks on Puerto Rico’s debt made during a paper towel-throwing visit to the island in early October, President Donald Trump said, “We’re gonna have to wipe that out.” But the seemingly compassionate, if off-the-cuff comment, was followed by a \$4.9 billion treasury loan to Puerto Rico, approved by the U.S. House of Representatives on Oct. 12, that the White House sought as part of a disaster relief package. Instead of debt relief, debt is being piled on.

Meanwhile, the Fiscal Control Board has postponed plans to shorten workdays for public employees until the following fiscal year and authorized the government to put \$1 billion toward the emergency response. But will the financial firms that are looking to recover debt from the island suspend their demands for payment? Or, will they usurp billions of dollars in public funds from an island where tens of thousands of homes lie in ruins, health facilities are barely functioning and electricity and telecommunications failures are a constant.

The principal players in the bankruptcy process under PROMESA are vulture funds, mutual funds, bond insurers and Wall Street banks. The Baupost Group, Aurelius Capital, Goldman Sachs and Tilden Park Asset Management are among Puerto Rico’s largest creditors. Many of these same firms profited handsomely a decade earlier by betting against the subprime mortgage market just before it tanked in 2007 and 2008 and helped to set in motion the biggest financial crisis in modern history.

In a continuing lawsuit against Puerto Rico, Aurelius Capital — which holds \$470,942,000 worth of Puerto Rican junk bonds — demands that the government use all available resources to pay back its creditors. Aurelius sued the government of Argentina for nearly a decade to force it to pay off the entirety of the debt the firm purchased at a discount.

Another group of creditors, including The Baupost Group and Whitebox Advisors, is seeking a portion of the revenues generated by island’s sales and use tax, which is not currently being charged due to the systemic collapse caused by the storm.

The federal judge presiding over Puerto Rico’s bankruptcy in San Juan, Laura Taylor Swain, postponed until further notice a general review of the proceedings that was set to commence on Oct. 4. But attorneys for Puerto Rico’s creditors on the mainland continue to submit motions in the bankruptcy proceedings, which are amassing in a digital archive while nearly all of the island is without light and or stable access to the internet.

Numerous market analysts have described Puerto Rico’s current debt load “unpayable” given the breadth of Maria’s impact. Yet loan forgiveness is nowhere in sight.

Continued on page 14



JOEL CINTRÓN ARBASSETTI

A PEOPLE’S RECOVERY

RADICAL ORGANIZING IN A POST-MARIA PUERTO RICO

By JUAN CARLOS DÁVILA

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — After Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico on Sept. 20, most telecommunications services collapsed, particularly cell phones and internet providers. People struggled for days to contact their loved ones, and although there have been some improvements, making a call, sending a text message, and connecting to the Internet is still a challenge in most areas.

Only certain analog and satellite telephones managed to survive the category-four hurricane, and the landline of Cucina 135, a community center located next to San Juan’s financial center, was one of them.

“Having a phone line was an invaluable resource,” said Luis Cedeño, spokesperson for El Llamado, an organization focused on providing support and unifying social movements in Puerto Rico. El Llamado (The Call) is supported by the Center for Popular Democracy and is led by a group of organizers from different sectors, including artists, communicators, social workers and student leaders.

The second day after the hurricane, El Llamado began calling Puerto Ricans in the diaspora from the landline of Cucina 135 to organize relief efforts independent of government agencies or big NGOs like the Red Cross. Cucina 135 is based in a small house that has been converted into a communal kitchen and meeting space. El Llamado now oversees Cucina 135, which serves as a gathering point for activists in a post-Maria Puerto Rico where they can exchange information and coordinate relief efforts. The main concern of organizers coming into the space was the mobilization of thousands of U.S. troops to the island who were not distributing the much-needed aid, but controlling it. Meanwhile prices soar and people go hungry.

In the rural town of Utuado, about 65 miles inland from San Juan, the military presence is widely visible. The U.S. Army has established a checkpoint at the entrance of the small urban center in this mountain town. Troops were posted three days after the hurricane hit. Still, more than a week later (I visited the town on Oct. 2), residents less than a mile away from the checkpoint had only received one FEMA meal box that contained two bottles of water.

Leonilda Maldonado Guzmán is a resident of Utuado; when I interviewed her, she talked to me about the abandonment she feels: “It’s like we don’t exist. In Utuado, we feel abandoned, because no help has arrived. As in other parts, there’s elderly people here. Most of us can’t communicate with our families. We don’t have medicine. Nobody has come to help. My house is damaged. I have asthma. I have many health problems.”

Responding to this official neglect, El Llamado is currently supporting more than 20 grassroots initiatives that range from debris cleaning brigades to agricultural projects to communal kitchens, including one in Utuado that identifies as a Center of Mutual Support (CAM in Spanish).

The CAMs fight hunger while striving to raise the political consciousness of participants.

Five of these centers have opened their doors since the hurricane. The first one appeared in the city of Caguas; the organizers’ philosophy is to encourage communities to unite and become self-sustaining, “The CAM is the proposal of a new municipality and a new country. The CAM is the new municipality of Caguas... through structures like this, of people participation, I know that we can construct other things,” said Giovanni Roberto, a former student leader at the University of Puerto Rico and current coordinator of the CAM in Caguas, which serves about 600 meals per day. Since 2013, Roberto has run a project called Comedores Sociales (“Social Diners”) that seeks to provide food to university students who struggle financially. This served as a foundation for the establishment of the CAM.

In the long term, the objective of the CAMs is to build popular power from within the communities and eventually move Puerto Rico away from its colonial dependency to the United States. Currently, Puerto Rico imports about 88 percent of its food, and, because of the Jones Act, supplies can only arrive on U.S. vessels. This means that even aid cannot come from countries other than the United States. The colonial status creates a major humanitarian problem, particularly after a catastrophe like Hurricane Maria, when Puerto Ricans are facing shortages of water, food and medicine on a daily basis.

Before Hurricane Maria, most activism in Puerto Rico was centered around the issue of the \$74 billion debt and opposition to the 2016 Puerto Rico Oversight Management and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA). The latter established a seven-member unelected oversight board that controls Puerto Rico’s finances. However, activists opposing the payment of the debt and PROMESA were focusing on hunger and poverty prior to Hurricane Maria. The catastrophe accelerated efforts already underway as the economic crisis and precarious position for the masses of Puerto Ricans is worsening even more.

After a community breakfast in Río Piedras, I sat down with Marisel Robles, a spokesperson from the group Promises Are Over (SALP in Spanish). SALP has been organizing against PROMESA since President Barack Obama signed it into law. Presently, Robles is one of the coordinators of the Olla Común (Common Pot), another CAM initiative. As some volunteers cleaned the support center, and others began preparing the meal for the next day, Robles stated, “Hunger was already being discussed, and the level of poverty was being discussed. But after the hurricane hit us so hard, the veil of everything was lifted.” The Common Pot in Río Piedras has around 30 volunteers that coordinate the distribution of 150 breakfast meals per day

Continued on next page

STORM MORE SEVERE

Continued from Page 12

As for the Electric Energy Authority, it could be subjected to an accelerated rate of privatization, while the hedge funds that hold government bonds may turn into investors in the reconstruction of the country’s infrastructure. A mass exodus of multinational corporations, wary of future hurricanes, is also expected

Given that Puerto Rico was expected to need 10 years to recover from its ongoing economic crisis even before the storm, I asked economist Caraballo Cueto how much further Hurricane Maria has set it back.

“It can set us back further,” he said, especially if the current debt payment blueprint and commercial restrictions, such as the Merchant Marine Act of 1920, remain in place. Also known as the Jones Act after the law’s author, the Merchant Marine Act mandates goods traveling on and off the island be transported by U.S.-owned, -built and -operated vessels. It drives the cost of everything from food to medicine up to 20 percent above prices on the U.S. mainland or on other Caribbean Islands.

If the Jones Act is eliminated, “economic recovery can move forward,” Cueto said. “The same happens if the local government decides to create a development plan that is not based on its current ‘laissez-faire’ model. That too, can bring us closer to a recovery.”

Joel Cintrón Arbasetti is a reporter at the Center for Investigative Reporting in Puerto Rico. This article was translated from Spanish by Georgia Kromrei.

PEOPLE’S RECOVERY

Continued from Page 13

from Monday through Saturday.

But the Common Pot should not be mistaken for a cafeteria, as Scott Barbés Caminero, coordinator of the CAM and member of the SALP, emphasized when addressing residents of Río Piedras before breakfast, “The Center of Mutual Support is not a cafeteria. It is a space where we come to help each other in light of a situation where the government collapsed after Hurricane Maria,” Barbés Caminero said. The Common Pot operates under an egalitarian system, which organizers call Sistema de Aportación (Contribution System). And while all comers are welcome to have breakfast, the objective is that everyone becomes involved with the project by volunteering for work, donating food items or contributing money, “If we all are doing this, Puerto Rico would be advancing” said one man as he waited in line for breakfast.

Mama called

from somewhere
near the sun,
where dying begets
rainfall and the ground
is made of the wrong earth.

there is a woman
in her home who threatens
to tear her roof off, to dismember
the body she labored
to remember.

i remind her
we come from a lineage
of shrapnel and stone,
an assemblage of aftermaths —
we will always
find one another.

she cries over
haunted sugarcane,
conversations
with the moon, trees
who offer survival.

i have heard
this song many times
but today, she taught me
the importance
of rain and how,
on some days,
tears suffice.

— VALLERIE MATOS



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COLOMBIA'S PRECARIOUS PEACE

BY MARIO MURILLO

BRICEÑO, Columbia — Mauricio Quiróz has always had a plan.

The 38-year-old farmer and entrepreneur lives with his wife and three kids on a small ranch on the lush, steep mountainside that surrounds the municipality of Briceño, in the department of Antioquia in northwestern Colombia.

Orphaned at a very young age, he was always forced to figure out for himself how to move forward in life. And despite growing coca for over 15 years on his 10-hectare parcel of land (about 25 acres) in the heart of Antioquia's coca-growing region, Quiróz had been anticipating a time when the lucrative crop would no longer be able to sustain his household. Farms like his are the entry point of the supply chain to the international cocaine trade, which has been the target of U.S. and Colombian officials for generations.

So several years ago, he began to cultivate coffee, cocoa, bananas, avocados and other licit products. Today, he plans on farming and marketing tilapia in a small pond he's converting from the enclosed area where he once maintained his processing lab for coca paste.

"It's going to be tough, because we're used to getting every two to three months anywhere between three to four million Colombian pesos (about \$1,500-\$1,600) for our coca paste, whereas with the other products we grow, like coffee, that's our take for the entire year," he says, smiling broadly as we make our way through the remaining coca fields on his sloping property. "But I knew this day would come and now it's a matter of working with all the people in the community to make the difficult transition as painless as possible."

That transition is the radical overhaul of the local economy that is occurring as a result of the peace deal signed last year between the government of President Juan Manuel Santos and the leftist rebels of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

RIPPING OUT THE ROOTS

The coca-crop substitution program is one of the most complex aspects of the peace agreement that is aimed at putting an end to the country's 53-year armed conflict, and it has already become the flashpoint of a recent wave of violence by state security forces participating in eradication effort as they confront the coca farmers, particularly in the southern department of Nariño. As an armed group, the FARC had maintained considerable territorial control for many years in several regions of the country, serving as the de-facto state in coca-growing territory. This history is at the crux of the first and fourth points of the six-point agenda that the FARC and the government signed and have been in the process of implementing since January.

Point one relates to comprehensive land reform and investment in and development of the countryside, which the FARC emphasized in its decades-long insurgency. Point four relates to the issue of illicit crops, specifically how to wean the countryside from its dependency on coca. The rush is on in the government's attempt to eradicate coca through the National Comprehensive Program for the Substitution of Illicit Crops, known by its Spanish acronym, PNIS.

The challenge is trying to reconcile the two points — comprehensive land reform and rural development on the one hand, and crop eradication and substitution on the other — in a way that is economically and socially sustainable and will not be too disruptive for the vast majority of the poor peasant farmers in just about every region of Colombia.

Given the history of government neglect, lack of infrastructure, a total absence of any level of technical support

for the communities and ongoing threats from paramilitary groups operating in the area, the prospects do not look so good. The implementation process is laced with profound contradictions, as the government's policy involves both voluntary and forced eradication. That has already created tensions with the communities most affected by the program.

"Officials focus on the number of hectares eradicated to show success. But there is very little preoccupation with the people, the families, the agricultural workers that are producing coca," said Pedro Arenas, director of the Observatory for the Cultivators and Cultivations Declared Illicit (OCCDI).

The Observatory, as it is more commonly known, has worked for the last few years to support and defend the rights of the thousands of peasant farmers and their families who have been involved in coca cultivation. The organization rejects the forced eradication of the coca fields and the U.S.-backed aerial fumigations that have gone on for years throughout the countryside — now on hold. It denounces the criminalization of the peasant farmers, arguing that they are honest, hard-working people with families who have had no other choice, given the economic conditions facing rural Colombia for decades.

"This is a complex network we are talking about — not only the coca farmers and the coca collectors, but the women who work on the farms, the small merchants in the area, the small-scale transporters that move products and services into and out of the veredas, or small villages," Arenas said.

In the first six months of the PNIS coca-substitution program launched earlier this year, more than 90,000 families agreed to eradicate more than 115,000 acres of coca crops manually. Up to 40 coca-growing communities in 13 departments have signed collective agreements for voluntary coca eradication. The government hopes to increase the total number of families participating in the program to over 130,000, responsible for roughly 170,000 acres of coca. That's an ambitious number by any stretch of the imagination.

In some regions, like Briceño, the government has already made the first payments to families that have signed on. They will receive subsidies to compensate for their initial loss of income, and are expected to receive further payments to help them set up substitution projects, such as Quiróz's fish farm. Each family can expect to receive a total of about \$12,000 in direct payments and technical assistance over the course of two years.

The problem is that once the farmers begin receiving those subsidies, they have to eradicate their crops completely — pulling them out by hand — within 60 days, or they will be put out of the program and be held criminally liable. This ultimatum has put intense pressure on the farmers and the communities they live in, without addressing many of the other issues that affect their economic condition.

Things came to a head on Oct. 5 when rural farmers gathered in Tumaco, Nariño, to protest the forced eradication being implemented by the security forces. Up to a thousand local farmers were protesting the government's refusal to address the local conflicts that clearly affect how to best to implement the PNIS substitution program. Eyewitnesses reported that highly armed special forces police fired indiscriminately on the protesters, resulting in at least eight reported deaths and over 50 wounded. The government initially claimed that the demonstrators had been forced to protest by so-called FARC dissidents that are filling the vacuum left by the guerrilla demobilization process, and that they were responding to an attack initiated by these dissidents. But eyewitness testimony overwhelmingly rejected that claim, a charge that was reminiscent of the discourse used by the government



MARIO MURILLO

GROUNDWORK: Mauricio Quiróz looks out on his small ranch on the lush, steep mountainside that surrounds the municipality of Briceño, in the department of Antioquia in northwestern Colombia.

TRADE OFFS: Wilmar Moreno says the government's single-minded focus on total acreage of coca crops eradicated comes at the expense of farmers.



MARIO MURILLO

whenever unarmed social movements protested during the years of the insurgency.

"The government first has to focus on changing its attitude towards us," warns Quiróz, who has committed himself to the crop substitution program. "They need to provide us training and infrastructure in order to make the people aware of the options regarding the substitution of crops. We need support and assistance from the government for this to happen."

Given right-wing Colombians' vocal resistance to almost every aspect of the peace process with FARC, it's unlikely that the government will even appear to backpedal on the eradication program. President Santos and his allies, many of whom are now actively campaigning for the 2018 presidential elections, do not want to appear weak in the face of non-stop attacks by members of the right-wing opposition, which are readily echoed in Colombia's mainstream corporate media.

Things got complicated in July, when the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime reported that coca cultivation in Colombia had increased by 52 percent, from 141,000 acres in 2015 to 215,000 hectares in 2016. Critics of Santos, including the Trump Administration, pointed to the U.N. report as evidence that the peace agreement with the FARC was a failure.

The White House is taking a hard line against any tolerance of gradual eradication. President Trump threatened to decertify Colombia as an ally in the drug war in September, demanding a heavier hand in dealing with the coca growers and continuing to reject any cooperation with FARC, still considered a terrorist group by the State Department.

In response, the Observatory argues that Colombia's history shows that violent, forced eradication works in the short term by reducing coca acreage, but that it is not sustainable in the long term, as it does not provide concrete solutions to the economic and social conditions that led these farmers to grow coca.

For Wilmar Moreno, a longtime community organizer in Briceño, the problem is the government's single-minded focus on total acreage eradicated. He says the vast majority of people in the area are committed to the substitution program, as long as the government fulfills its commitments — which up to now, it has not.

"Despite the many problems [coca] brings with it, it is an economy that has given us food to eat, for our families, for our kids. And it's not simply about replacing a coca plant with a banana plant, as President Santos did recently when visiting the area," he says. "The government has to create the conditions for us to be able to make this transition into a new economy."

FILLING THE VACUUM

Security is another problem. As in Tumaco, in Briceño and other parts of the country, the recent incursion of new armed groups is filling in the vacuum where FARC fighters have demobilized. In April, INDEPAZ (Instituto de Estudios para el Desarrollo y la Paz, the Institute of Studies for Development and Peace, based in Bogotá) reported that 14 "narco-paramilitary" structures had a visible presence in 149 municipalities, occupying territories that had been controlled by the FARC for decades and intimidating community leaders, social-movement activists and peasant farmers.

Continued on page 21

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THE REVOLT THAT SHOOK THE WORLD

WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM THE TRIUMPH OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AND ITS SUBSEQUENT DEMISE

BY PETE DOLACK

History does not travel in a straight line. I won't argue against that sentence being a cliché. Yet it is still true. If it weren't, we wouldn't be still debating the meaning of Russia's 1917 October Revolution on its centenary, and more than a quarter-century after its demise.

Neither the Bolsheviks nor any other party played a direct role in the February revolution that toppled Tsar Nicholas II, for the leaders of those organizations were in exile abroad or in Siberia or in jail. Nonetheless, the tireless work of activists laid the groundwork. The Bolsheviks were a minority even among the active workers of Russia's cities then, but later in the year, their candidates steadily gained majorities in all the working-class organizations — factory committees, unions and soviets. The slogan of “peace, bread, land” resonated powerfully.

The time had come for the working class to take power. Should they really do it? How could backward Russia, with a vast rural population still largely illiterate, possibly leap all the way to a socialist revolution? The answer was in the West: The Bolsheviks were convinced that socialist revolutions would soon sweep Europe, after which the advanced industrial countries would lend ample helping hands. The October Revolution was staked on the prospect of European revolutions, particularly in Germany.

We can't replay the past, and counterfactuals are generally sterile exercises. History is what it is. It would be easy, and overly simplistic, to see the idea of European revolution as romantic dreaming, as many historians would like us to believe. Germany came close to a successful revolution, and likely would have done so with better leadership and without the treachery of the Social Democrats who suppressed their own rank and file in alliance with the deeply undemocratic Germany army. That alone would have profoundly changed the 20th century, and provided impetus to the uprisings going off across the continent.

Consider the words of British Prime Minister David Lloyd George in 1919 as he discussed his fears with Georges Clemenceau, the French prime minister: “The whole of Europe is filled with the spirit of revolution. There is a deep sense not only of discontent, but of anger and revolt among the workmen against prewar conditions. The whole existing order, in its political, social and economic aspects is questioned by the masses of the population from one end of Europe to the other.”

Russia was the weak link in European capitalism, and the stresses of World War I added to the conditions for a revolution. Revolution was not inevitable. Leon Trotsky's analogy of a steam engine comes to life here: “Without a guiding organization, the energy of the masses would dissipate like steam not enclosed in a piston-box. But nevertheless what moves things is not the piston or the box, but the steam.”

The October Revolution wouldn't have happened without a lot of steam; without masses of people in motion working toward a goal. The revolution faced enormous problems, assuming it could withstand the counter-assault of a capitalist world determined to destroy it. It was a beacon for millions around the world, inspiring strikes and uprisings across Europe and North America. Dock and rail workers in Britain, France, Italy and the United States showed soli-

arity by refusing to load ships intended to be sent to support the counterrevolutionary White Armies. Those armies, assisted by 14 invading countries, massacred Russians without pity, seeking to drown the revolution in blood.

The revolution survived. But the revolutionaries inherited a country in ruins, subjected to embargoes that allowed famines and epidemics to rage. The cities emptied of the new government's working-class base and the new nation was surrounded by hostile capitalist governments. There was one thing the Bolshevik leaders had agreed on: Revolutionary Russia could not survive without revolutions in at least some European countries, both to lend helping hands and to create a socialist bloc sufficiently large enough to survive. The October Revolution would go under if European revolution failed.

Yet here they were. What was to be done? With no road map, shattered industry, depopulated cities, and infrastructure systematically destroyed by the armies hostile to the revolution — and having endured seven years of world war and civil war — the Bolsheviks had no alternative to falling back on Russia's own resources. Those resources included workers and peasants. For it was from them that the capital needed to rebuild the country would come, as well as to begin building an infrastructure that could put Russia on a path toward actual socialism, to make it more than an aspirational goal well in the future.

The debates on this, centering on the tempo of transition and how much living standards could be shortchanged to develop industry, raged through the 1920s. Russia's isolation, the dispersal of the working class, the inability of a new working class assembled from the peasantry to assert its interests, and the centralization necessary to survive in a hostile world — all compounded by ever-tightening grasps on political power by ever-narrowing groups that flowed from the country's isolation — would culminate in the dictatorship of Joseph Stalin.

Stalin would one day be gone, and the terror he used to maintain power gone with him. But the political superstructure remained — the single party controlling economic, political and cultural life, and the over-centralized economic system that steadily became a more significant fetter on development. The Soviet system was overdue for large-scale reforms, including giving the workers in whose name the party ruled much more say in how the factories (and the country itself) were run. Once the Soviet Union collapsed, and the country's enterprises were put in private hands for minuscule fractions of their value, the chance to build a real democracy vanished.

A real democracy? Yes. For without economic democracy, there can be no political democracy. The capitalist world we currently inhabit testifies to that. What if the people of the Soviet Union had rallied to their own cause? What if the enterprises of that vast country had become democratized — some combination of cooperatives and state property with democratic control? That could have happened, because the economy was already in state hands. That could have happened, because a large majority of the Soviet people wanted just that. Not capitalism.

They were unable to intervene during perestroika. Nor did they realize what was in store for them once the Soviet Union was disbanded, and Boris Yeltsin could impose shock therapy that threw tens of millions into poverty and would eventually cause a 45 percent reduction in gross domestic product —

much deeper than the U.S. contraction during the Great Depression.

A revolution that began with three words — peace, bread, land — and a struggle to fulfill that program ended with imposed “shock therapy” — a term denoting the forced privatization and destruction of social safety nets coined by neoliberal godfather Milton Friedman as he provided guidance to Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet. Millions brought that revolution to life; three people (the leaders of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus) put an end to it in a private meeting — with the financial weapons of the capitalist powers looming in the background, ready to pounce.

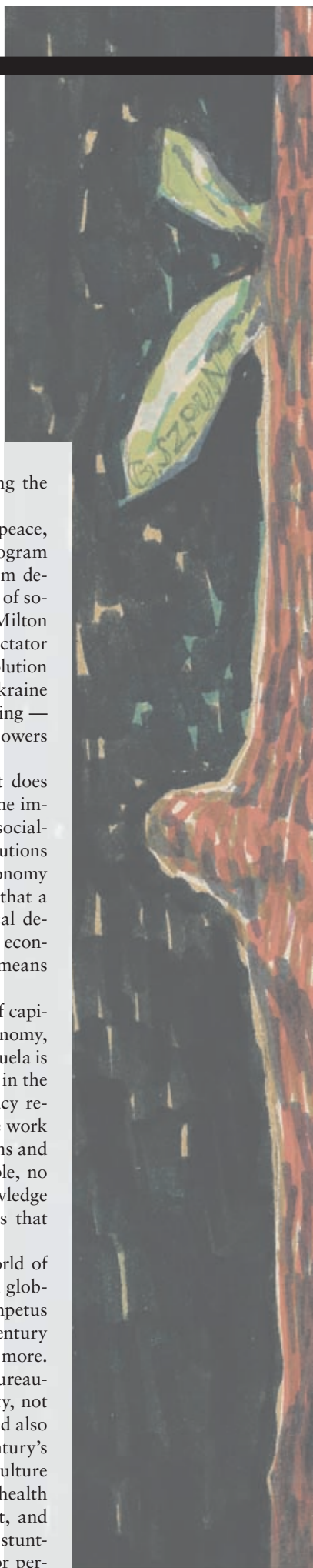
The Soviet model won't be recreated. That does not mean we have nothing to learn from it. One important lesson from revolutions that promised socialism (such as the October Revolution) and revolutions that promised a better life through a mixed economy (such as Nicaragua's Sandinista revolution) is that a democratic economy and thus a stable political democracy have to rest on popular control of the economy — or, to use the old-fashioned term, the means of production.

Leaving most of the economy in the hands of capitalists gives them the power to destroy the economy, as Nicaragua found out in the 1980s and Venezuela is finding out today. Putting all of the enterprises in the hands of a centralized state and its bureaucracy reproduces alienation on the part of those whose work makes it run. It also puts into motion distortions and inefficiencies, because no small group of people, no matter how dedicated, can master all the knowledge necessary to make the vast array of decisions that make it work smoothly.

The world of 2017 is different from the world of 1917. For one, the looming environmental and global-warming crisis of today gives us additional impetus to transcend the capitalist system. Unlike a century ago, we need to produce and consume less, not more. We need the participation of everyone, not bureaucracy, and planning from below with flexibility, not rigid planning imposed from above. But we need also learn from the many advances of the 20th century's revolutions — the ideals of full employment, culture available for everyone, affordable housing and health care as human rights and dignified retirement, and the notion that human beings exploiting and stunting the development of other human beings for personal gain is an affront.

The march forward of human history is not a gift from gods above nor a present handed us by benevolent rulers, governments, institutions or markets. It is the product of collective human struggle on the ground. If revolutions fall short or fail, that simply means the time has come to try again and do it better.

Pete Dolack is the author of It's Not Over: Learning From the Socialist Experiment (Zero Books, 2016), which includes a study of the Russian and German revolutions after World War I and the development and fall of the Soviet Union, with a focus on retrieving this history for emerging and future movements that seek to overcome the political and economic crises of today.

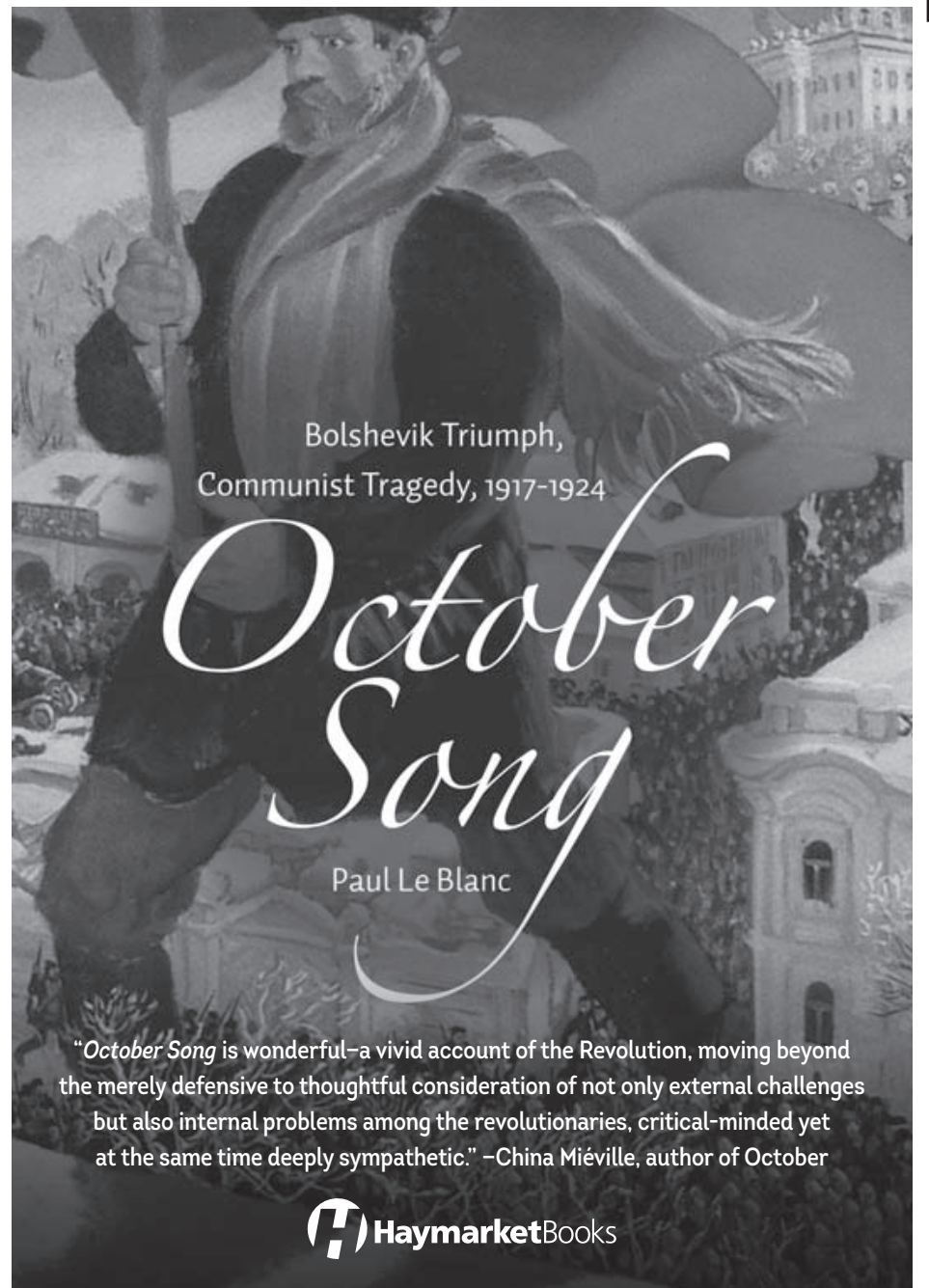




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ALBUMS TO LISTEN TO THIS FALL

Losing
BY BULLY
SUB POP

Lotta Sea Lice
COURTNEY BARNETT & KURT VILE
MATADOR

All American Made
MARGO PRICE
THIRD MAN RECORDS

Sunnyvale Gardens
ANTWON
SELF-RELEASED

What In The World
THE PROFESSIONALS
METALVILLE RECORDS

By Brady O'Callahan

Fall brings with it a sense of endings. It makes us consider the ephemerality of life. But it is also a time for new beginnings, new school years, fresh elections. We see a change in weather as the leaves start to fall, even if climate change seems hell bent on robbing us here in New York of that pleasure. If your record collection seems to be dragging just as much as the season, consider giving a few of these autumn releases a spin.

Nashville natives Bully follow up their 2015 debut LP with *Losing*. The album charges from the very start, with singer-songwriter Alicia Bognanno's powerful howl fully intact. The record would sit comfortably on a shelf next to 90's college rock stalwarts Sonic Youth, Nirvana, Weezer or Hole. Bognanno's vocals jump from gravelly roar to tender breaths and back again, adding a powerful dynamism to her personal lyrics — exemplified by the album's opening track, "Feel the Same." She lets us listen into a vulnerable moment in a romantic relationship: "Spoke with you last night. (Do you still hate me?) But you were upset. (I miss you lately.) But I felt calm when I woke up. (Let's just forget it.) Found my head. (I won't regret it.)"

It's a cathartic, emotional, empowering record.

If you're looking for something a little more easy-going, pop on Courtney Barnett & Kurt Vile's *Lotta Sea Lice*. This album comes as a collaboration between two of indie rock's biggest names in recent years. Barnett's debut LP *Sometimes I Sit and Think, and Sometimes I Just Sit* was one of 2015's best albums, and certainly one of the strongest debut records in recent memory. Kurt Vile's excellent record *b'lieve i'm goin down* came out that same year. Mutual admiration brought them together for an altogether pleasant album. The pair's mutually laid-back styles make them a natural couple. It results in sing-along-worthy harmonies ("Let It Go," in particular, stands out), traded verses and a quirky naturalism — like maybe we're just listening in on two buddies having fun with rock songs.

With last year's *Midwest Farmer's Daughter*, Margo Price planted herself firmly in the mists of modern country greats, earning her supporting spots for Willie Nelson, Chris Stapleton, Faith Hill and Tim McGraw. Praised for her apt storytelling — reminiscent of classic country legends like Emmylou Harris and current label-make Loretta Lynn — Price has taken her sound a step further with *All American Made*.

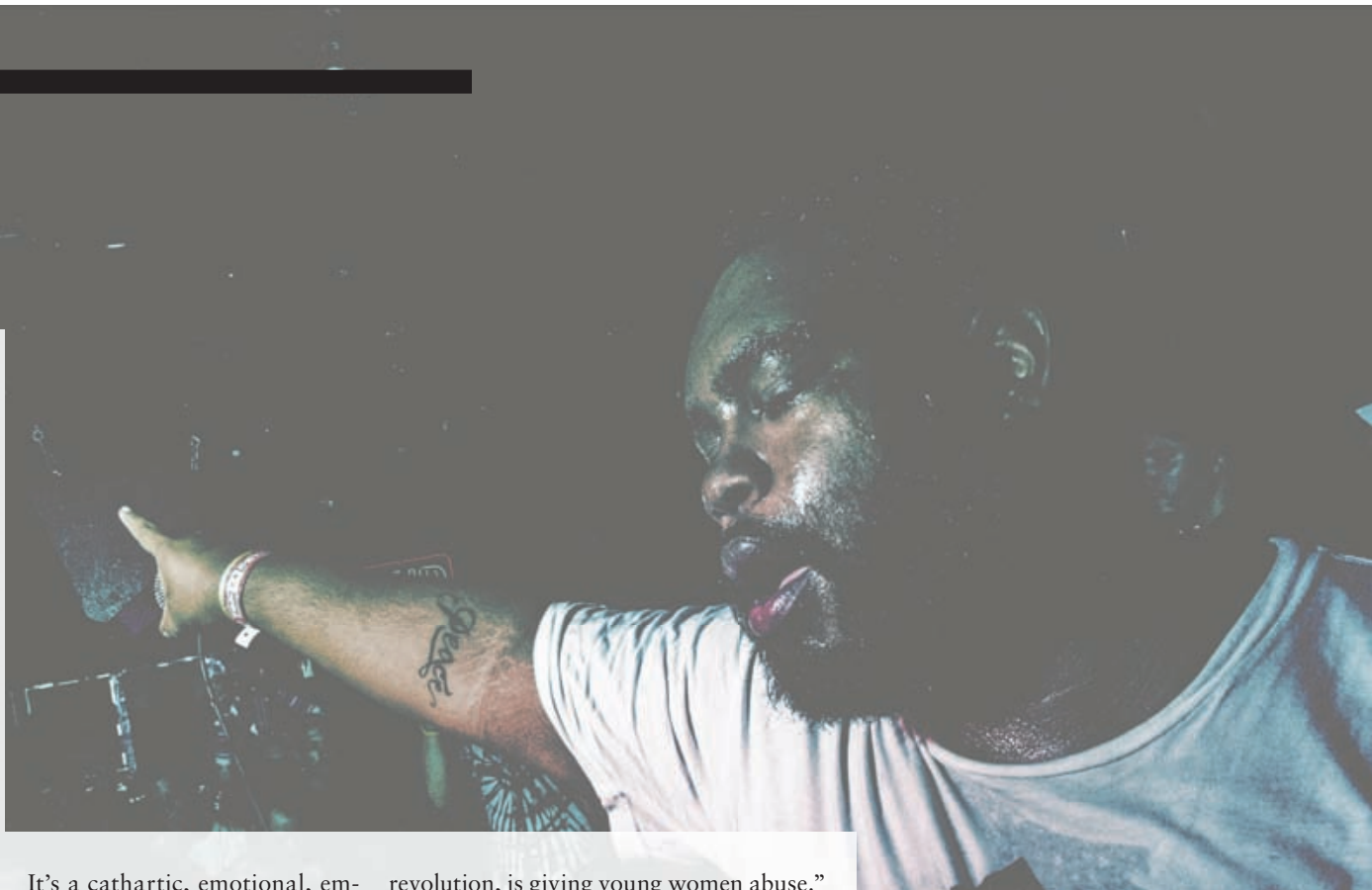
It's a welcome addition to a genre that's going through a bit of a renaissance. A little more bluesy, a little more soulful than *Farmer's Daughter*, the record is also one that will undoubtedly push country forward. Price turns outward on *All American Made*, examining the world we've found ourselves in and speaks her mind without a filter. "Pay Gap," takes shots at gender injustice. "At the end of the day it feels like a game, one I was born to lose," Price sings. "This institution, a dead

revolution, is giving young women abuse." Price carries the torch for country music, women and America on this stellar record.

If hip-hop's more your flavor, give Antwon's *Sunnyvale Gardens* mixtape a shot. The San Diego rapper established his musical pedigree in the hardcore scene but found rap to be his true calling. He has been known to collaborate with a diverse group of musicians, often working with folks who don't typically produce rap music. His wide array of influences and collaborators makes for an interesting, completely individual record. The standout track, "Visine," featuring up and coming sad-boy rapper Lil Peep, finds the pair smoking weed without eye drops to mask their THC-fueled antics. The song mixes hip-hop braggadocio with laid back, almost melancholic beats and melody. As a whole the mixtape is funny, weird and guaranteed to merit repeated listens.

If you're in the mood for a comeback, you'll probably be interested in The Professionals' *What In The World*. Formed by Paul Cook and Steve Jones of the dissolved Sex Pistols in the early 1980s, the band entertained a brief stay on the British punk rock scene before calling it quits. They're back this year with a star-studded album. *What In The World* features contributions from members of The Clash, Def Leppard, Guns 'n' Roses and others. Overall the album is clean without sacrificing edge, precise and fun as hell. It has a spirited energy that could challenge any punk band with members a quarter all these guys' age, all the while maintaining a clear rock veteran's approach to songwriting.

With autumn quickly approaching (hopefully), your playlists could probably use a change of color too. These records will carry you through the rest of the year or until winter, at least. Happy listening!



BRANDON ANDERSON



ANGELINA CASTILLO FOR THIRD MAN RECORDS

RUNNING THE GAMUT: The punk-influenced rapper, Antwon (top), and country cantatrice Margo Price are among a diverse group of artists putting out innovative sounds this autumn.

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BY MICHAEL HIRSCH

Do we need the police? Brooklyn College sociologist Alex S. Vitale poses that question vividly in his *The End of Policing*: Are the police guarantors of social peace or its disruptors? Is the force's mandate to serve the public equally and fairly, or to act as social-control agents, protecting property and its few owners at the expense of the many?

Vitale traces the origins of the current push for policing as the universal solution for social ills to the 1980s popularization of the conservative nostrum "broken windows policing." It promoted "zero tolerance" for surface manifestations of disorder no matter how minor, arguing that if that disorder were allowed to exist, it would inevitably metastasize into serious crime.

He argues that policing is the wrong solution for many issues, particularly those where something's illegality itself — alcohol in the 1920s, gambling and marijuana — is what makes it a problem. Drug addiction, he insists, is not a criminal-justice issue: As with sex work, it is the prohibition that makes it criminal and allows victimization through exploitation. Even gang violence, he claims, is largely a response to police provocations against black and brown youth. Border policing, when not just deadly, is a dead end. It can't stop the flow of migrants, not when free trade destroyed local economies in Central America while U.S. agribusiness requires a seasonal workforce, but won't pay living wages to Americans.

Even when police practices are based on good intentions, Vitale argues, cops often work with populations better served by specialists, especially those like drug counselors and youth social workers who have emerged from the communities affected by those problems. The law creates a Catch-22 for social services such as drug treatment: Even where special programs exist for treating and housing addicts, individuals referred by the criminal-justice system get to jump the line and displace those with similar needs who aren't facing criminal charges. In many cases, people not facing charges aren't eligible for services.

In the case of the mentally ill, Vitale notes how such seemingly salutary innovations as "crisis response teams, specialized courts and improved training can reduce the impact of the criminal system on the mentally ill and on the criminal-justice system, but these are not replacements for a rational, functioning mental-health system."

The punitive treatment of sordid-looking and often annoying homeless such as aggressive panhandlers may soothe public sensibilities, but has no impact on the overall homeless situation. Without a housing policy that creates stable, long-term residences, chasing the homeless away and eradicating squatter camps is not just ineffective, but cruel.

In a humane and relatively cooperative society, there would be few areas that require police intervention. Vitale's point, then, is not to eliminate the police per se, but to collapse the need for police to an irreducible minimum.

In an otherwise comprehensive discussion of political repression, Vitale could have spent more time on police repression of workers' struggles, which he treats as political

repression of the left in just one omnibus chapter. He's not wrong, but treating these as purely political and not also fundamentally economic attacks slights the broader systemic aspect of police intervention against strikes and job actions. Labor history is replete with those attacks.

He also doesn't acknowledge the reactionary role played by police unions. In New York, the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association, along with the detectives' and sergeants' unions, do more than defend their members: They actively lobby for retrograde social legislation both in City Hall and in Albany. Opposition, largely from officers of color, does occur, but more often over issues like discrimination within the force than over community concerns.

Vitale presents a dialectic in which police intervention becomes provocation in too many situations, causing oppressed people to fight back sometimes but not often enough in ways that build the community and a movement, which in turn only exacerbates police and state repression. Even where police try a soft approach, as with community policing or the use of non-punitive civil rather than criminal courts, the threat of arrest and criminalizing is omnipresent. For addicts, treatment and housing is never longterm. In the absence of such necessary arrangements, it is no wonder that some despairing elements in affected communities ironically demand more police protection even as others fight for better-grounded services.

Any ameliorating influences police could provide would better be served, as Vitale gives examples throughout, in well-funded social programs framed with the advice and consent of local people. Above all, jobs or an adequate income flow would be the death knell of urban and rural poverty, the real cause of crime and delinquency, and Vitale says as much. But that requires radical social change, Vitale's overall point, though he doesn't press it home. The book is only implicitly an anti-capitalist critique. To do more would mean writing another book.

Short of the average cop having the wisdom of a Talmudic scholar and the patience of a sacristan, nothing can overcome the objective reality of ineffective training, dangerous situations and an ethos that stresses suppressing criminals over community-building and systemic prevention of crime, and often doesn't discourage thuggery. The end of policing as we know it can't come too soon.

Much of Vitale's empirical evidence parallels that in the excellent Truthout collection *Who Do You Serve, Who Do You Protect?* and he acknowledges an intellectual debt to Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow*. Those are both key works in understanding police and racial repression. But Vitale's amassing of trenchant facts into an enticing intellectual framework makes *The End of Policing* a must-read for anyone interesting in waging and winning the fight for economic and social justice.



GARY MARTIN

POLICE, THE PROBLEM NOT THE SOLUTION

The End of Policing
BY ALEX S. VITALE
VERSO, 2017

By Michael Hirsch

COLOMBIA

Continued from Page 17

One of these is the new paramilitary group "Clan del Golfo," which has been operating in northern Antioquia for the past several months, according to several interviews. This is part of an alarming national trend that has been growing since the peace accords were signed last year.

Since January, over 60 social-movement leaders have been murdered, including people involved in land-recuperation efforts environmental-defense campaigns against extractive industries such as mining and indigenous and peasant activists.

While the victims have been mostly civilians, demobilized

FARC members and their families now also appear to be at risk. Former FARC combatants are getting killed regularly in a variety of departments. This echoes the "dirty war" of the 1980s when thousands of militants of the Patriotic Union, the political party affiliated with the FARC, were assassinated in what some have called political genocide.

It is still too early to tell how all of this will play out, but the situation is indeed precarious. Quiróz recalled the darkest days of the conflict in Briceño and the surrounding municipalities, when all the local farmers would hunker down in their homes with their families by 6 p.m. to avoid getting caught in any outbreak of combat. Today, things are noticeably different, he said, with local residents walking freely throughout the territory, even after sunset.

"We hope this peace is going to be long-lasting, because tranquility does not have a price," he says, sipping a cup of sugar water on his porch. "But if the government doesn't provide us with guarantees, doesn't fulfill its side of the deal and continues treating us as criminals, this tranquility won't last long."

Mario Murillo is a professor of communication and Latin American studies at Hofstra University on Long Island, and is the author of *Colombia and the United States: War, Unrest and Destabilization*.

BY STEVEN SHERMAN

With the Republicans controlling all three branches of the federal government and 26 states, now is a good time to examine far-right ideology. Two recent books, *Democracy in Chains* by Nancy MacLean and the newly revised edition of Corey Robin's *The Reactionary Mind*, do just that.

Democracy in Chains, focused on the life and legacy of little-known economist James Buchanan, makes the case that the far right is fundamentally anti-democratic, because its upper-class elites know that an economic agenda that makes them richer at the expense of everyone else cannot survive normal democratic proceedings.

MacLean begins by looking at John C. Calhoun, who, in the years before the Civil War, argued that property rights guaranteed by the Constitution prohibited the federal government from interfering with slavery. Defenders of slavery even questioned whether the principle of government by the people was as legitimate as their property rights.

Buchanan, after studying with libertarian economic philosophers Milton Friedman and F.A. Hayek, began his academic career in Virginia, just after the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Buchanan argued that funding for public education should be converted to a voucher program, in which parents could choose which schools their children attended and the state would pay, saying that he disapproved "of both involuntary (or coercive) segregation and involuntary integration." This idea dovetailed neatly with some Virginia localities' attempts to reinvigorate segregation by closing public schools.

It was in this context that Buchanan developed his "public choice" theory. Politicians are rational actors, analogous to economic actors in the marketplace. While the latter seek to maximize their return, he wrote, politicians' primary goal is re-election. Since taxing the wealthy and redistributing funds was likely to be popular, this created incentives for them to entrench the tyranny of the state over property holders.

He passed through the University of California at Los Angeles, where radicals like the Black Panthers helped inspire him to develop ideas about how to empty the universities of critical thought and focus students on careers in business — not least through the promotion of student debt. He advised Chilean military dictator Augusto Pinochet on crafting a constitution that banned labor unions and privatized pensions and health care.

By the mid-1980s, he was ensconced at George Mason University in Washington's Virginia suburbs. The limits

of President Ronald Reagan's assault on the welfare state left him convinced that Social Security should be attacked through stealth and deception, because there was minimal public support for destroying it. He won a Nobel Prize and crossed paths with Charles Koch, who would fund academic programs that led to George Mason becoming the training ground for a disciplined cadre sent out to reshape U.S. politics in line with extreme libertarian positions.

In the final chapter, MacLean describes those Koch-trained cadre wreaking havoc as they advance their vision of securing property rights against the dream of public governance. In this world, even providing public-health services is an overreach of government, and the people of Flint would have drinkable water if they had more "personal responsibility." If I have a complaint about the book, it is that I wish there were one more chapter detailing the march from George Mason into centers of power.

Democracy in Chains touches on many subjects the left needs to think hard about. These include the relationship of racial backlash to extreme libertarian economics; the use of state governments as a bulwark against both federal regulation and local insurgencies; the potential for democracy in the United States to become further constrained; and the use of a base in the universities to train a cadre to march through the institutions of the state. One might wonder if the academic left's emphasis on cultural studies in the last few decades has been a poor strategy, compared to what the Koch/Buchanan cadres have accomplished.

Corey Robin revised his 2011 book for two reasons — first, because some readers told him that after a strong start, it degenerated into a series of essays. Second, he wanted to say something about Donald Trump. The new edition is in some ways more cohesive than the original.

His statement of the theoretical framework remains powerful. The U.S. far right — obsessed with sustaining power and hierarchy — is more reactionary, he says, than conservative (skeptical of change, venerating the free market and tradition, and suspicious of state power). When power relationships at work or in the family, typically regarded as private, are unsettled by revolts from below and are no longer taken for granted, the reactionary mind sets to work recasting those hierarchies.

Reactionaries thus recognize the threat from the left and rise to the struggle. Robin demonstrates that they can be protean and intellectually daring, and seek regeneration through violence. He devotes a number of chapters to giants of Western political thought, including Thomas Hobbes, Edmund Burke, Friedrich Nietzsche, and F.A. Hayek, to show how this process works. Of particular note is the way

they revise economic theories that give labor credit for the creation of economic value — most notably in the work of Adam Smith — and shift that credit to some elite, such as men of capital, entrepreneurs, or taste makers.

When Robin shifts focus to the United States, the narrative loses something. Ayn Rand and Antonin Scalia simply aren't as interesting thinkers as those mentioned above. More important, he doesn't really address the question of right-wing populism, the embrace of reactionary ideas of hierarchy by ordinary people. He seems to think it's cooked up by elites and sold to the masses, rather than allowing for the sort of subaltern agency that might produce it on its own.

All this is prelude to the question of Trump. In power, Robin believes, Trump is not an American Adolf Hitler, as he has repeatedly been checked by opposition within the halls of power and the street. He has done the most damage not through unprecedented authoritarian gestures, but through the ordinary presidential powers of appointing judges and executive-branch administrators.

Robin emphasizes the long-term downward trajectory of Republican electoral prospects, with Trump winning the presidency with a smaller percentage of the vote than Richard Nixon, Reagan, or either George Bush. He sees the splintering of the far right as different tendencies going their own ways. Trump has not been an effective leader for this moment, as his rage focuses on his own obsessions rather than resonating with the broader concerns of people outside his cult of personality.

Most strikingly, Robin suggests the real root of the dilemmas of both Trump and the Republicans is the weakness of the left — that the reactionaries are adrift without a genuine emancipatory project to confront.

This is a very suggestive idea, but the timing is more complex. When Reagan entered the White House, the movements of the 1960s were mostly in retreat, if not altogether vanquished. George W. Bush had an impressive reactionary presidency without much of a left around at all. During the 2016 campaign, many observers, including Robin, took Trump's candidacy as evidence of the right's unprecedented weakness. Is it not possible that Trump is being underestimated again, based on the chaos of his first year?



GARY MARTIN

INSIDE THE CONSERVATIVE MIND

Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America

NANCY McLEAN
VIKING, 2017

The Reactionary Mind (2nd Edition)

COREY ROBIN
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2017

By Steven Sherman

DYSTOPIA REDUX

Blade Runner 2049

DIRECTED BY DENIS VILLENEUVE
WARNER BROS.

By Mark Read

In 1982, the year *Blade Runner* was released, climate change was a dimly understood phenomenon discussed by a few scientists. Set in 2019, it followed Decker (Harrison Ford) as he hunted down rogue replicants that had become discontent with the brief and limited existence they were given by their maker, Eldon Tyrell. The constant rain and gloom of its future Los Angeles gave the film a mysterious aura, the backdrop against which a dark fable about consciousness and freedom was set. Dystopian films were relatively rare back then, and the audience for them was narrow.

In 2017, when a global-warming disaster is looming and droughts, forest fires and hurricanes are ravaging California and the Caribbean, the backdrop of ecological collapse in the sequel doesn't feel so much mysterious as terrifyingly plausible. Dystopia is no longer a niche-market notion, the speculative setting for a dark fable.

reasons as much as any flaws in the film itself (and there are several), *Blade Runner 2049*, the sequel, is unable to quite match the mythic grandeur of its predecessor. It is as though the real world has caught up with the dark imaginings of Ridley Scott and Philip K. Dick, rendering the landscapes and situations of their fictions incapable of fostering the unsettling awe that is needed to create a work of great existential scope. Don't get me wrong, this is a worthy sequel. The cinematography is breathtaking, the sound overwhelming, the acting is mostly terrific (with the exception of Jared Leto), and the script is very, very good. By most measures it is a tour-de-force. Despite all of its majesty, however, it cannot manage to ascend to the heights of a bare-chested Rutger Hauer, as Roy Batty, describing and lamenting his brief but miraculous life.

Blade Runner 2049 picks up in the aftermath of a replicant insurgency that has shaken the galaxy and taken

Nearly every preview in the theater is some variation on the theme of near-future doom.

down Tyrell Corp. in its wake. In its place stands Wallace Corp., with new replicants that have been rendered more docile and predictable, but no less capable. So capable, in fact, that replicants now perform as Blade Runners themselves. Replicants hunting replicants. Ryan Gosling's character, K, is one such Blade Runner. The film does a wonderful job exploring themes that emerged in the original, such as the role of memory, and thus story, in the construction of self. Gosling is effective and affecting as K pulls on thread after thread, unraveling the mystery of his origin, with the tantalizing possibility of him being a "real boy" dangled in front of him, egging him ever onward.

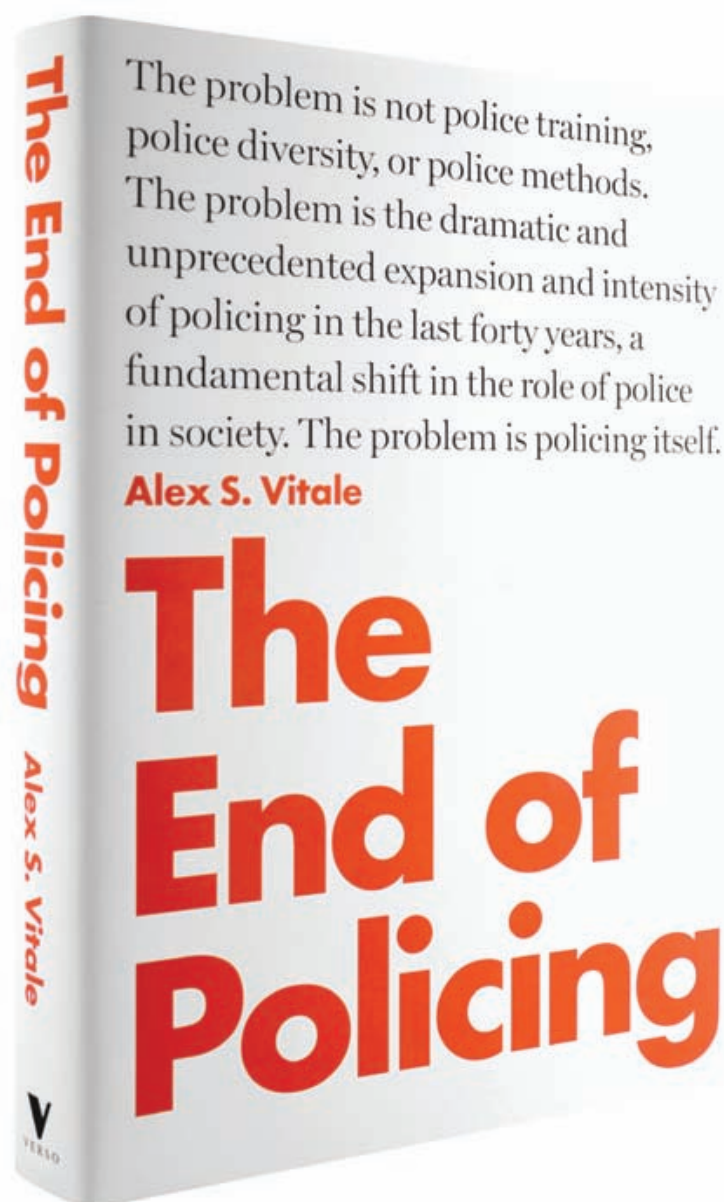
While the film does a wonderful job exploring some of the same themes as the first, its efforts at mapping new terrain feel either overwrought or ill conceived. In the character of Wallace, for instance, the writers have created a villain that belongs in a James Bond movie, a creature of pure malevolence, completely inhuman in his aspirations and actions. Bad guys can be complex and interesting, and this film needed one of those — not

a cartoon bad guy, who, Leto plays cartoonishly.

The real killer, however, is how the film posits biological reproduction as the ultimate proof of "real" life. This makes little sense within the world of these characters, the best of whom were not born at all. The miracle of birth is posited as the golden chalice, the holy grail of being, end of story. Really? Is K really of less value than the biological progeny of a replicant? The film doesn't appear to be very interested in this question, which, if you ask me, is an insult to replicant-kind the galaxy over. Most of all, it is a profound insult to Roy Batty's tears, shed in rain at the end of his brief existence, which was no less a miracle than any human boy's.

ALL TOO INHUMAN:

Ryan Gosling & Sylvia Hoeks in *Blade Runner 2049*.



The End of Policing

by Alex S. Vitale

How the police endanger us and why we need to find an alternative

"Deeply researched, but also vibrantly and accessibly written ... Essential reading for anyone wishing to understand the dire state of policing today." —Elliott Currie, author of *Crime and Punishment in America*

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